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ABSTRACT

The purpose of these four studies conducted during the 1967-68 academic year was to use the phrase reading programs in an exploratory manner with disadvantaged youth. Study 1 was an investigation of phrase reading development training with incarcerated male delinquents. There were 15 control subjects and 17 experimental subjects. The subjects in the reading program had about 5000 practice phrases from the primary and intermediate phrase reading development film series. The results indicated that the phrase reading group made about two years average gain in reading, and the control group failed to make any substantial progress. Study 2 was an investigation of phrase reading training with fourth grade children from a socially and culturally restrictive background. The phrase reading was incorporated as part of the regular language arts curriculum. The subjects had about 5000 practice phrases and gained about one year in reading from pretest to posttest. Study 3 investigated phrase reading training with ninth grade students designated as slow learners. The results indicated negligible results for the group's reading skills. Study 4 investigated phrase reading training with educably handicapped junior high school students. As a group, they made no significant improvement in reading levels. (WR)

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# PHRASE READING TRAINING WITH DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS: FOUR EXPLORATORY STUDIES 1967-1968

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# PHRASE READING TRAINING WITH DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS: FOUR EXPLORATORY STUDIES 1967-1968[1]

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An earlier CEMREL reading study (Amble and Kelly, 1967) indicated that children in school districts of limited social-cultural background benefited substantially from phrase reading development training. The special phrase reading program helped those students who ordinarily had difficulty achieving at an expected annual rate. In an experimental-control group paradigm, the relative gains in educational achievement appeared to generalize over subject matter. The Amble-Kelly study corroborated several previous investigations with school handicapped children,

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[2]Dr. Amble holds an academic appointment in the Department of Guidance and Educational Psychology, Southern Illinois University. The author expresses his sincere gratitude to CEMREL for the excellent coordination of the phrase Reading Project. Administration and teacher support and participation are gratefully acknowledged to Jan Holloway, Murphysboro, Illinois, Junior High School; Charles Popp, Illinois Youth Commission; Gene Rogers, Carbondale, Illinois, High School; Ruth Sutton, Little Egypt Development Center, Metropolis, Illinois; and Maude Taylor, Golconda, Illinois.

(Amble and Muehl, Experiment III, 1966a; Amble and Butler, 1967; Fangman, 1967; and Olsen, 1968).

There is an apparent need to develop supplementary reading procedures for children who are disadvantaged in the school setting. Even by casual observation it is evident that a number of students are unable to acquire reading skills at grade level expectancy. Thus, in a given intermediate or junior high school class, ten to twenty-five percent of the group might be reading two or more years below their classmates and grade placement.

The phrase reading programs offer a novel and vital addition in the reading curriculum by providing an opportunity for phrase reading development by visual and perceptual span training.[3]

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[3]In early reading instruction considerable emphasis must necessarily be placed on the recognition of individual words. However, successful reading requires the rapid integration of words into large contextual units--phrases and sentences. The student's transition to this higher-level reading skill, if it did occur at all, was essentially uncontrolled by the teaching process and left for each child to develop on his own. The phrase reading training programs provide the opportunity for all students to learn to read by meaningful units.

The Phrase Reading Development Programs were developed and tested with school-age children from the third grade to the high school level, and with educationally disadvantaged students. There are two programs designed to provide reading training of word phrase combinations from the simplest sight vocabulary at the first-grade level to the more complex phrases needed for mature reading.

The program is designed to provide a highly structured learning situation by reducing distracting stimuli during training, by providing immediate information on phrase reading progress, and by motivation resulting from the unique film series. Students are required to read over five thousand phrases in the course of the program. They attempt to recognize each phrase as a complete meaning unit during a single reading fixation. This extensive practice is of paramount importance for the successful development of a perceptual reading response.

The purpose of the four studies conducted during the 1967-68 academic year was to use the phrase reading programs in an exploratory manner with disadvantaged students. Teachers were encouraged to develop procedures which would maximize the implementation of the phrase reading programs in the classroom setting. For these studies tight design and statistical procedures were not instituted since the focus of the investigations was on the implementation of the phrase reading program and teaching procedures themselves. The classes in the studies included students of varying religions, sex and racial backgrounds.

## Study I

Study I was an investigation of phrase reading development training with incarcerated male delinquents.[4] The paradigm was to pretest two unselected groups and allow one group to participate in the phrase reading program while the other group remained outside of the special program. This was the only study where a control group was established. There were no formal academic programs among the camp activities, although during the recreation periods books and magazines were available. The groups were tested midway and following the phrase reading program with alternate forms of the Iowa Silent Reading Test, Elementary Edition.

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[4]Illinois Youth Commission, Giant City State Boy's Camp, Makanda, Illinois.

There were 15 control subjects and 17 experimental subjects. The subjects in the reading program had about 5000 practice phrases from the primary and intermediate phrase reading development film series. The average chronological age was 16 1/2 years, with a four year age range. The average intelligence quotients as obtained from the subjects records were as follows: verbal IQ's 91.8 and performance IQ's 95.7 (standard deviations both 16.6).

The results of Study I are reported in Table 1. A review of the findings, indicated at the bottom of the table, show that the subjects who received phrase reading training made substantial gains in reading across the several criteria measures from pretest to post test. While the phrase reading group made about two years average gain in reading, the control failed to make any substantial progress. In fact, the control group declined in overall reading performance during the third testing period. The greatest gains for the experimental subjects came in Sentence Meaning, where their initial performance was the poorest.

## Study II

Study II was an investigation of phrase reading development training with fourth grade children from a socially and culturally restrictive background. The paradigm was to test the subjects before, during and after

TABLE 1

ISRT Standard Score Means for Incarcerated Male Delinquents (Study I)

| Groups | Iowa Silent Reading Tests | Test Periods: Pretest | Midtest | Post Test |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Phrase Group | Rate | 147.88 | 154.24 | 162.47 |
| Control Group | | 149.60 | 155.07 | 152.40 |
| Phrase Group | Comprehension | 147.35 | 149.59 | 160.41 |
| Control Group | | 157.60 | 157.27 | 152.20 |
| Phrase Group | Directed | 143.47 | 148.65 | 158.65 |
| Control Group | Reading | 152.40 | 152.27 | 145.60 |
| Phrase Group | Word | 151.47 | 151.71 | 158.94 |
| Control Group | Meaning | 154.07 | 156.93 | 151.47 |
| Phrase Group | Paragraph | 152.41 | 150.41 | 160.76 |
| Control Group | Comprehension | 151.07 | 153.07 | 152.60 |
| Phrase Group | Sentence | 125.35 | 150.76 | 155.59 |
| Control Group | Meaning | 153.60 | 152.80 | 144.87 |
| Phrase Group | Alphabetizing | 156.76 | 168.41 | 168.82 |
| Control Group | | 155.13 | 156.80 | 148.53 |
| Phrase Group | Use of | 142.29 | 152.29 | 159.76 |
| Control Group | Index | 147.53 | 147.00 | 141.07 |
| Phrase Group | Average Grade | 6.3 | 7.2 | 8.3 |
| Control Group | Equivalent Gain (all tests) | 7.2 | 7.3 | 6.7 |

the special reading program with alternate forms of the Iowa Silent Reading Test, Elementary Edition. The phrase reading program was incorporated as part of the regular language arts curriculum. The large class of 50 students necessitated some grouping procedures. The subjects had about 5000 practice phrases with the primary and intermediate phrase reading development series.

In correspondence with the reading consultant, the following information was given: "Because of the general economic level of the area, many of the children may be labeled culturally deprived. Their communicative ability is low and a regional dialect prevails. Many might be said to use substandard speech patterns and do not see the use or reason for change. At least 10 percent to 15 percent of the school enrollment is on some type of public welfare. The elementary school has an enrollment of 430 students."[5]

The results of Study II are reported in Table 2. A review of the findings, indicated at the bottom of the table, show the subjects gained about one year in reading from the pretest in January, 1968, to the post test in April, 1968, three months later. The greatest gains were made in Directed Reading, Location of Information: Alphabetizing and Use of Index. Comprehension increased as Reading Rate increased over the same materials.

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[5]Personal correspondence from Ruth Sutton, June 12, 1968.

TABLE 2

ISRT Standard Score Means for Fourth Grade Disadvantaged Students (Study II)

| Iowa Silent Reading Tests | Test Periods | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Pretest | Midtest | Post Test |
| Rate | 127.55 | 136.52 | 137.25 |
| Comprehension | 121.33 | 137.66 | 138.59 |
| Directed Reading | 117.80 | 136.00 | 139.51 |
| Word Meaning | 131.12 | 134.38 | 136.08 |
| Paragraph Comprehension | 133.44 | 142.37 | 137.99 |
| Sentence Meaning | 131.77 | 136.75 | 137.74 |
| Location of Information | 138.77 | 150.54 | 155.89 |
| Use of Index | 134.50 | 140.28 | 140.49 |
| Average Grade Equivalent Gain (all tests) | 4.6 | 5.5 | 5.5 |

## Study III

Study III was an investigation of phrase reading development training with ninth grade students designated as slow learners. The paradigm was similar to that of Study II, to test the subjects before, during and following the special reading program with alternate forms of the Iowa Silent Reading Test, Elementary Edition. The program of phrase reading training was to be incorporated as part of the regular language arts curriculum. The subjects practiced reading phrases from both the primary and intermediate phrase reading development series.

The teacher described the students as extremely difficult to deal with even in an adjusted-curriculum program and small classes. Complete test data were obtained on 13 boys and 4 girls, with IQ's in the 70's and 80's. "The attitude of many of these students were very poor. Even though they knew they were not being graded . . . . The attitude varies from class to class and student to student. I sometimes wonder if some of them will ever wise up and realize what opportunity they have here? Caught two copying and they thought nothing of it. Looked at me like well what's the matter."

The results of Study III are reported in Table 3. A review of the findings, reported at the bottom of the table, indicated that as a group the overall changes in reading skills were negligible. The period of testing and training extended for six weeks, from January 31, 1968, to March 12, 1968.

TABLE 3

ISRT Standard Score Means for Ninth Grade Slow Learners (Study III)

| Iowa Silent Reading Tests | Test Periods | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Pretest | Midtest | Post Test |
| Rate | 135.41 | 132.29 | 133.65 |
| Comprehension | 133.65 | 128.71 | 137.59 |
| Directed Reading | 145.00 | 146.12 | 147.94 |
| Word Meaning | 147.29 | 148.00 | 145.82 |
| Paragraph Comprehension | 151.76 | 150.94 | 148.00 |
| Sentence Meaning | 147.82 | 142.82 | 151.71 |
| Location of Information | 161.71 | 164.53 | 168.82 |
| Use of Index | 156.59 | 161.76 | 151.88 |
| Average Grade Equivalent Gain (all tests) | 6.4 | 6.4 | 6.5 |

## Study IV

Study IV was an investigation of phrase reading development training with educably handicapped junior high school students. The paradigm of the investigation was similar to the two previous studies. The phrase reading program was incorporated as part of the regular language arts curriculum. The primary phrase reading program was used, with a practice schedule of over 5000 phrases during a five month period.

The twelve students in the study included seven boys and five girls assigned to the Educable Mentally Handicapped class in the Junior High program. Placement in the special education program is based on individual psychological examinations and staff recommendations. The IQ's for the EMH program, as established in the State of Illinois, ranges from the 55-60 level to 80 at the upper limit. The mean chronological age for the class was 14.7 years, with the average IQ about 66.7. One student in the class was not included in the phrase reading program because she possessed no functional reading skills and was considered too low intellectually.

The results of Study IV are reported in Table 4. A review of the findings indicated that as a group there were not consistent changes in reading skills during the course of the study. An inspection of individual students indicated five of them showed marked increases in reading level from pretest to post test. The teacher felt that it would be a better assessment of the reading level of the EMH students to allow them to take the tests at there own rate, rather

TABLE 4

Iowa Silent Reading Test

Mean Scores for Educably Handicapped Junior High School Students (Study IV)

| Iowa Silent Reading Tests | Test Periods | |
|---|---|---|
| | Pretest | Post Test |
| Rate | 121.00 | 124.58 |
| Comprehension* | 136.42 | 137.17 |
| Word Meaning* | 119.17 | 122.08 |
| Paragraph Comprehension* | 147.58 | 145.33 |

*Test scores obtained under unstandardized conditions.

than as timed tests as designated in the Manual of Instruction. This recommendation was followed as an experimental procedure. It should be noted the scale scores reported cannot be compared with the normative group since the information (data) were obtained under unstandardized conditions.

## Teaching Procedures

The purpose of the exploratory studies was to develop teaching procedures which would maximize the implementation of the phrase reading programs with disadvantaged students.

Classroom observations during the phrase reading program and dialogue with the teachers rather quickly revealed that the teachers, when given maximum latitude for implementation, tended to adopt-widely different procedures. The teachers apparently adopted procedures of implementation which reflected the composition of the class and which reflected their unique skills as instructors.

Among three of the project classes, the most notable change from the earlier studies was to include oral student participation in various forms as part of the training procedures. The teacher would call out a row, a student, a group by sex or the entire group to respond aloud to selected phrases. This appeared to generate much interest and attention. Competition between rows or boys versus girls added an element of enthusiasm.

In the group with 50 students, Study II, the teacher had different groups (designated by row) assigned to do research

and prepare a skit for a particular state. Their identification as a small working unit was extended into the phrase reading program, so that working together as a cohesive unit was utilized and fostered. With this large group of students, independency of work was encouraged and necessary. The teacher indicated that "in sentence meaning we asked the children to use the test phrases in sentences, sometimes stories of their own and sometimes stories using first person . . . to give the children an opportunity to use the knowledge in problem situations."

In Study IV flash cards were developed as part of the phrase reading program. The teacher provided the following comments:

"Prior to the initial showing of each film, the children were given copies of the phrases used in the practice phase of the film and were asked to circle the words that were unfamiliar to them. These, in turn, were written on flash cards for classroom activity.

The flash cards were motivational and instructional in various ways:

1. Flash cards were used with small groups of children. Each phrase was introduced, then flashed for the children to copy. Afterward, children were called on at random to say phrases orally.

2. Students were chosen to be chairmen of small groups to give out the cards when they, themselves, knew all the phrases.

3. Students would say the phrase, then use it in a sentence.

4. Two teams were formed, and a contest was held. Two students, one from each team,

would come to the front of the room, and the phrase would be flashed; the first one to say it correctly would receive a point for his team.

5. A variation of this game was to have the two students read the phrase, then run to the board and write it. The first one with the correct writing of the phrase received a point for his team and a "money card" for spending at the classroom store.

6. Children were allowed to keep flash cards of phrases they did not know to work on during free time.

The film phrases were also integrated into English and Spelling. Various phrases were selected for the students to write in complete sentence form. Also, the words from the phrase tests were used as spelling words.

For the most part the following routine was followed in the film presentation. Prior to the showing of the film, phrase cards were presented for the more difficult phrases. In showing the film, the students were allowed to read the first few phrases silently. Then, students were called on at random to read orally one to five phrases. When the film was completed, the students checked each others papers, put their scores on the wall charts, and played some of the flash-phrase games mentioned previously."

The incarcerated male delinquents represented a unique situation from the point-of-view of teaching procedures since there was no other educational program and most of the sources of educational frustration and peer group identification were in abeyance. The students seemed to be nourished by the reading training procedure.

Attention and motivation were high. The residence boys in the experimental group attended the training sessions without urging, and boys not in the control group asked the teacher to sit on the evening training sessions. This seemed to be a remarkable change in attitude and behavior for young males who only several months before were spending their energies in antisocial and educationally unproductive ways. Teacher approval and the structured regimentation of the camp appeared to be facilitating factors in the learning process.

There were problems in Study III with the phrase reading program which warrant some review. From the teacher's daily comments it seemed that several situations occurred during the program that tended to inhibit phrase reading training with these students. For the first several weeks the primary series was used for training, and evidently fostered attention and motivation. As the teacher shifted to the intermediate series the continuous phrase reading training at this level was too difficult, and frustration and negativism became increasingly evident. A total phrase reading training program of over 10,000 phrases in a six week period evidently exhausted any functional value of the program. When the post test was given the teacher noted that "these students dislike taking these tests. I told them they will have to take the bitter with the sweet." Several students did not follow directions and marked the test "any way just to get it done."

In Study III the teacher showed as many as three training films during a single training session, used part of the program which seemed to have a direct negative effect on the students, and satiated the students with an isolated, phrase training far beyond their endurance, interest and motivation level. These procedures would not suggest themselves as modes of implementation of the phrase reading program to be incorporated as an integral part of the language arts-reading curriculum.

## Conclusion

The four demonstration studies have afforded the opportunity to use the phrase reading development training programs with children who are disadvantaged in the school setting. The teachers tended to adopt procedures for implementation of phrase reading training which reflected the composition of their student groups and their own definition of teaching as an art.

The phrase reading development program can be integrated into the regular language arts program with school handicapped students, and in one study appeared to be of functional value for reading education on its own merits. The atmosphere and manner of implementation continue to be of utmost importance in the educational process, as the teacher remains the essential variable in the learning process.

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